County may name child sex solicitors

Ordinance being drafted would publicly shame those convicted

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Los Angeles County supervisors have moved one step closer toward publicly shaming individuals convicted of soliciting sex from minors.

Interim County Counsel Mary Wickham told the supervisors that she expects to bring a draft ordinance before the board next week that will enable the county to post the names and booking photographs on the county's website of individuals who have been convicted of soliciting sex from minors.

Supervisor Don Knabe requested the ordinance late last year saying he wanted to begin a "shame campaign" to lessen the demand for child sex trafficking.

The report was one of a number of items discussed at Tuesday's meeting regarding children who are victims of sex trafficking and regarding the county's child welfare system.

"They can say what they want, but it really is child rape," Knabe said. The statement coincides with action the supervisors and Los Angeles County Sheriff Jim McDonnell took last week to ban the term "child prostitute" and to no longer arrest minors who are victims of sex trafficking.

Wickham said the ordinance

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> — Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, about the naming of a former judge to head the Office of Child Protection

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> — Former L.A. County Juvenile Court Presiding Judge Michael Nash

Minors

would apply to those convicted of soliciting sex and those convicted of loitering with intent to solicit sex, with an emphasis on soliciting sex from minors. She said a defendant's name and photograph would be removed if an appeal was successfully granted or if the case was expunged.

Supervisor Sheila Kuehl asked Wickham to bring back an opinion on whether posting the names before the time period a defendant has to appeal has expired would expose the county to litigation. She also cautioned against posting the information of someone who has been convicted of loitering with intent to solicit sex, likening the charge to "mind reading."

Knabe said he hoped the posting of the names and photographs would have a "dramatic effect."

The supervisors on Tuesday also moved to create a more coordinated approach to providing services for child sex trafficking victims, creating a leadership team among Sheriff's Department, Probation and Department of Children and Family Services officials.

The county will develop a marketing campaign to advertise a "Safe Space Program" where victims of child sex trafficking could go if they felt they were in immediate danger.

The county also is exploring ways to spend $3.2 million on housing and safe facilities for victims of child sex trafficking.

point former L.A. County Juvenile Court Presiding Judge Michael Nash to the position of executive director of the Office of Child Protection. The office was created last year in response to a blue ribbon commission report following the death of an 8-year-old Palmdale boy, Gabriel Fernandez.

"I'm pleased we have landed with someone who is a long-term advocate of children's well-being and safety who offers decades of legal and policy experience," said Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, who co-authored the motion establishing the Office of Child Protection.

"I pledge to you that I will give every bit of my being to make this a success," Nash told the supervisors.

Knabe, who voted against Nash's appointment, released a statement following the vote.

"I have consistently expressed my strong belief that this office is not needed," Knabe wrote. "On that basis, I oppose this appointment, though I do not dispute Judge Nash's experience or knowledge. I have never believed that adding more levels of bureaucracy will solve the challenges we face or help us protect our most vulnerable children.